

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01 AID-05 PC-01 CU-02 SIL-01 LAB-04

EB-07 A-01 OPR-02 OC-05 CCO-00 /080 W

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O R 101606Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8603

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY LIMA

DIA WASHDC

USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

S E C R E T QUITO 0260

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, EC

SUBJECT: REPORTS THAT MILITARY WILL REPLACE PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ:
POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY CONTINUES

REF: QUITO 0231

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: POLITICAL CRISIS IN ECUADOR REMAINS
UNRESOLVED AS OF MID-MORNING JANUARY 10. DECISION EVIDENTLY
MADE BY SENIOR MILITARY TO REPLACE PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ, BUT
INTERNAL RIVALRIES APPARENTLY HAVE PREVENTED DECISION REGARDING
SUCCESSOR(S). GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN HAVE ANNOUNCED PUBLICLY
THAT NO CHANGE IN PRESIDENCY HAS OCCURRED, AND THE MILITARY
GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN STEPS TO TRY TO PRESERVE ORDER. TWO
TO FOUR DEATHS WERE REPORTED AS A RESULT OF DEMONSTRATIONS
IN CUENCA. THE GOE HAS CLOSED TWO RADIO STATIONS. FIVE
EX-PRESIDENTS HAVE CALLED FOR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL
GOVERNMENT. MILITARY CONTINUES AS DETERMINANT OF TYPE OF
GOVERNMENT. INTERNAL DISSENSION AMONG MILITARY SEEMS TO
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HAVE PROVIDED RODRIGUEZ SOME ROOM TO NEGOTIATE TIMING OF

HIS DEPARTURE. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICAL CRISIS REMAINS UNRESOLVED AS OF 10:00 A.M., JANUARY 10. RUMORS AND REPORTS ABOUND, MANY OF THEM CONFLICTING. THE REPORTS THAT THE JOINT COMMAND AND SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS OF THE ARMED FORCES HAVE DETERMINED TO REMOVE PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ SEEM VALID, IN SPITE OF OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS OF NO CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT. MOST COMMON REPORT FROM PERSONS CLOSE TO PRINCIPAL ACTORS IS THAT A JUNTA WOULD REPLACE THE PRESIDENT BUT THAT ITS COMPOSITION HAS BEEN IN DISPUTE.

3. TIMING OF CHANGE REMAINS A MYSTERY. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT TIMING HAS BEEN DISCUSSED WITH THE PRESIDENT, AND COULD BE DELAYED UNTIL AFTER HIS DAUGHTER'S WEDDING AND LARGE RECEPTION SCHEDULED FOR THIS EVENING, JANUARY 10. THERE IS ALSO A REPORT THAT PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ HAS ASKED THAT CHANGE BE DELAYED UNTIL FEB 16 WHEN HE WILL HAVE COMPLETED FOUR YEARS IN POWER AND HAS PLEDGED TO REVEAL DETAILS OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT'S PLAN OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION FOR RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL AND CIVILIAN RULE. DISSENSION AMONG SENIOR MILITARY MAY BE PROVIDING SOME ROOM FOR NEGOTIATION TO THE PRESIDENT, WHO REPORTEDLY CONTINUES TO MEET INDIVIDUALLY WITH SENIOR MILITARY OFFICERS.

4. JANUARY 8 AND 9 WERE FILLED WITH CONTENTION, RUMORS, AND EXPECTATIONS. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN VARIOUS MEASURES TO MAINTAIN CONTROL AND PRESERVE PUBLIC ORDER. GENERAL RAUL PUMA, THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, WAS ARRESTED EARLY ON THE AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 9. NO OFFICIAL EXPLANATION HAS BEEN GIVEN FOR THE ACTION, BUT REPORTS STATE THAT HE WAS ARRESTED BECAUSE OF HIS POSITION IN INTERNAL DISCUSSIONS AMONG SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE MILITARY. ALSO REPORTED ARRESTED ON JANUARY 9 BY THE GOVERNMENT WERE LTCOL JAIME SAENZ AND LTCOL ROBERTO CASTRO, BOTH OF WHOM WERE BANISHED FROM THE COUNTRY IN CONNECTION WITH THE SEPTEMBER 1 COUP ATTEMPT. LEONIDAS CORDOVA, THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF DRIVERS UNION OF PICHINCHA, WAS ALSO DETAINED. A NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND TRANSPORT WORKERS HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED FOR BRIEF PERIODS IN CONNECTION WITH
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DEMONSTRATIONS, ESPECIALLY IN CUENCA.

5. A DISPUTE BETWEEN GENERAL GUILLERMO DURAN, COMMANDER OF THE ARMY, AND GENERAL GUSTAVO VASCONEZ, THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, ALSO BECAME PUBLIC. VASCONEZ CHARGED THAT DURAN, WHO PRESUMABLY WOULD BE A MEMBER OF A RULING JUNTA IN PLACE OF THE PRESIDENT, WOULD NOT BE FIT TO RULE BECAUSE OF EXTREMISM. WE HAVE REPORTS ON JANUARY 10 THAT AN ARREST

ORDER HAS BEEN ISSUED BY THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT AND THAT VASCONEZ IS IN HIDING.

6. DURING THE EARLY AFTERNOON OF JAN 9 GENERAL BOLIVAR LOPEZ HERRMANN, THE SECRETARY GENERAL FOR ADMINISTRATION, DENIED TO NEWSMEN THAT THERE HAD BEEN CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT, AND THIS WAS REPEATED BY RADIO THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE AFTERNOON. AT 7:10 P.M., ON JAN 9TH, ADMIRAL ALFREDO POVEDA (CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT COMMAND, GENERAL COMMANDER OF THE NAVY, AND ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER) FLANKED BY GENERAL DURAN, AND RECENTLY PROMOTED GENERAL LUIS LEORO, COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE, APPEARED ON TELEVISION. POVEDA STATED BRIEFLY THAT THE PRESIDENT HAD ORDERED THE JOINT COMMAND OF THE ARMED FORCES TO PRESERVE ORDER, AND HE DENIED REPORTS THAT THERE HAD BEEN CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT. THE STATEMENTS OF LOPEZ AND POVEDA HAVE BEEN REPEATED BY RADIO ON THE MORNING OF JANUARY 10.

7. THE GOE CLOSED TWO RADIO STATIONS FOR HAVING BROADCAST EXTENSIVELY ON REPORTS AND RUMORS RELATED TO THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS. TRANSMISSION WAS SUSPENDED AT 7:15 P.M., JAN 9, FOR RADIO QUITO (WHICH IS THE STATION OF QUITO NEWSPAPER EL COMERCIO) AND FOR RADIO COLON (OF THE CHAIN BELONGING TO ANTONIO GRANDA CENTENO, WHOSE TV CHANNEL 4 WILL REPORTEDLY RECOMMENCE OPERATION ON JAN 10 AFTER BEING SUSPENDED FOR A WEEK BY THE GOVERNMENT). TELEVISION CHAFNEL 8 (ALSO OF EL COMERCIO) REPORTEDLY WAS TOLD TO REPORT ONLY OFFICIAL NEWS AND IT DID NOT PRESENT ITS SECOND SCHEDULED NEWSCAST ON THE NIGHT OF JAN 9. DURING THE AFTERNOON OF JAN 9 NEWSMEN WERE BANNED FROM THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE WHERE SENIOR MILITARY HAVE BEEN MEETING, AND AT ABOUT 6:00 P.M. NEWSMEN WERE ASKED TO LEAVE THE AREA OF THE GOVERNMENT PALACE.

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8. POLICE REMOVED ALL SPECTATORS FROM THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF THE GOVERNMENT PALACE AND CLOSED IT OFF AFTER MINOR DISTURBANCES THERE. REAL PROBLEMS ERUPTED IN THE SOUTHERN CITY OF CUENCA, WHERE BOTH TRANSPORT WORKERS AND STUDENTS WERE DEMONSTRATING. NEWS MEDIA REPORTS STATED THAT DEATHS AND WOUNDED RESULTED FROM CLASHES WITH THE POLICE THERE, WITH REPORTED DEATHS BEING TWO TO FOUR.

9. CIVILIAN OPPONENTS OF THE MILITARY REGIME ARE NOW BEGINNING TO TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION. FOUR EX-PRESIDENTS (CAMILO PONCE, CARLOS JULIO AROSEMENA, MARIANO SUAREZ, AND JOSE MARIA VELASCO IBARRA) ISSUED ON THE EVENING OF JAN 9 A PLAN FOR RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER. FORMER PRESIDENT OTTO AROSEMENA INDEPENDENTLY CALLED

FOR THE RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT RODRIGUEZ. THE LIBERAL PARTY ISSUED A STATEMENT ON JAN 9 REITERATING ITS PREVIOUS DEMANDS FOR A RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT, AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS HAVE INFORMED EMBASSY THEY ARE AGAIN WORKING ON A JOINT MANIFESTO CALLING FOR RETURN TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT.

10. THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT IS NOT ONLY EMBROILED IN DISPUTES OVER ITS LEADERSHIP, BUT IS ALSO OCCUPIED WITH PRESERVATION OF ITS RULE. AS INDICATED ABOVE, IT IS ATTEMPTING TO COPE WITH RETURNED PLOTTERS FROM THE SEPTEMBER 1 COUP ATTEMPT, STUDENTS, OPPOSITION CIVILIAN POLITICIANS AND A TRANSPORT CRISIS. ONLY ON THE LAST SUBJECT HAS THERE BEEN ANY RELIEF. ON THE NIGHT OF JAN 9 THE TRANSPORT WORKERS UNION DETERMINED TO END ITS STRIKE AND RESUME WORK ON JAN 10.

1. COMMENT: WERE IT NOT FOR THE INTERNAL RIVALRIES AMONG AND WITHIN THE MILITARY SERVICES, GENERAL RODRIGUEZ ALMOST CERTAINLY WOULD HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFULLY DEPOSED BY JAN 8 OR 9. AS IT STANDS, HE APPEARS TO HAVE GAINED SOME, BUT NOT MUCH, BREATHING SPACE BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTIES THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND HAS HAD IN DECIDING IN THE COMPOSITION OF A REPLACEMENT GOVERNMENT.
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